

# FABLES

**VERTIGO**

issue 37

SUGGESTED FOR  
MATURE READERS  
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**WILLINGHAM**  
**BUCKINGHAM**  
**LEIALOHA**



JJ05



**A** DARK, DANK  
CAVE IN A  
FARAWAY WORLD.

HERE'S A  
TASTY TREAT  
COME  
TO OFFER HIMSELF UP  
FOR MY MIDDAY  
SNACK.

THAT WASN'T  
EXACTLY WHAT I  
HAD IN MIND FOR  
THIS VISIT.

TRUTH IS,  
OLD WORM, I'D  
HOPED YOU'D BE  
LONG DEAD BY  
NOW.

# **T**he Saint George Syndrome

Chapter Two of HOMELANDS

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ALAS FOR YOU,  
I'M *STILL* ALIVE AND MY  
INNER FURNACE STILL  
BURNS *HOT*.

PITY, THAT. IN  
ALL MY AMBITIONS I  
*NEVER* HOPED TO ENTER  
THE RANKS OF DRAGON  
SLAYERS.



NO CHANCE  
I COULD JUST GET  
YOU TO *SHOW* ME THE  
GATE TO THE NEXT  
WORLD?

MAYBE  
AFTER I *COOK*  
YOU A BIT.



NOT GOING  
TO HAPPEN. THE WITCHING  
CLOAK DOESN'T *BURN* AND  
WON'T LET *ME* BURN.



NOT  
WHILE I  
WEAR  
IT.



EVEN FROM  
*DRAGON'S*  
BREATH.





AND THE CLOAK HOLDS MANY THINGS: LIT TORCHES, BEHEADED PUPPETS AND VORPAL SWORDS.

READY TO MAKE AN END OF THIS?

YES, SILLY BOY, LET'S END IT.

OW!

DROPPED YOUR MAGIC NEEDLE, BOY.

AND NOW I'VE GOT YOUR CLOAK.

OKAY, THIS ISN'T HOW I IMAGINED THIS GOING.

BUT STILL, ONE WHO ENTERS THE HERO TRADE NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO IMPROVISE.

OR SO I'M TOLD.



BET YOU DIDN'T ANTICIPATE *THIS*, HUH? IT WON'T TEAR ANY MORE THAN IT WILL BURN.

HMMMMPH!

SO YOU'RE KIND OF *SCREWED* JUST NOW.

HHH IL HRNN URR HNN!

HWWT HSSS?

HHH NHH!

YOU'RE GETTING *AWFUL* BIG AND *GLOWY* THERE, PARTNER.

INNER FURNACE BACKING UP?

FORGIVE MY *HORRIBLE* MANNERS IN DUCKING INSIDE SOME COVER.







HELLO?

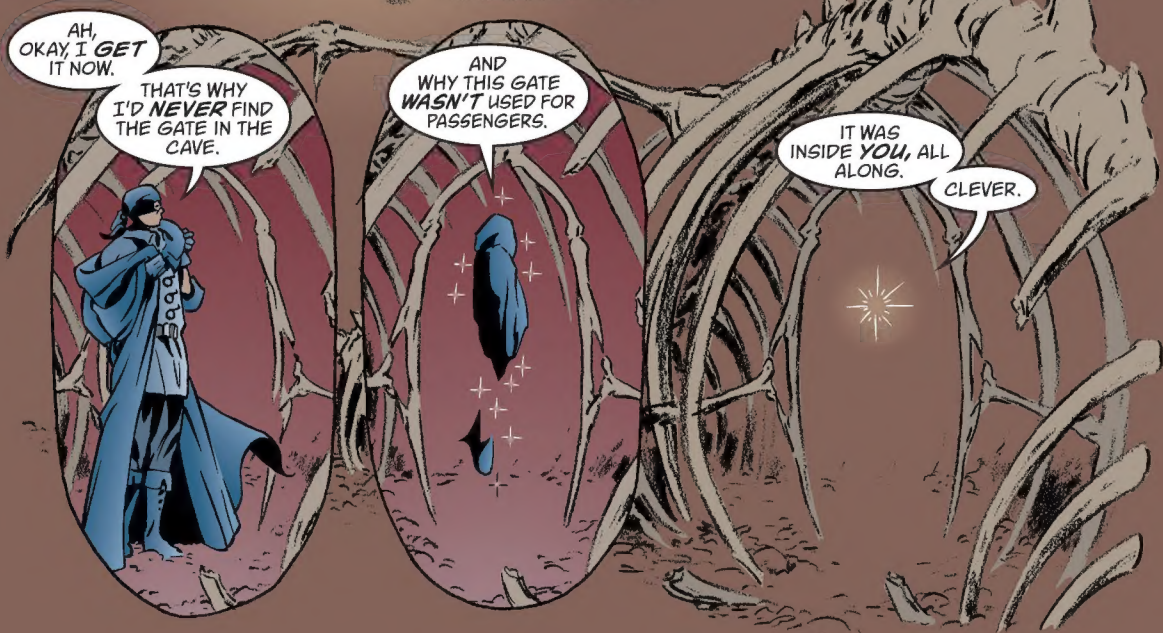
OH, BOY. NOTHING LIKE THE SMELL OF SULFUR AND ASH.



WOW.

ALL THESE GOLD PIECES MELTED INTO ONE VAST BUMPY GOLDEN CAVE CARPET.

THAT'S SOMETHING I'LL HAVE TO REMEMBER TO TELL FLY.



AH, OKAY, I GET IT NOW.

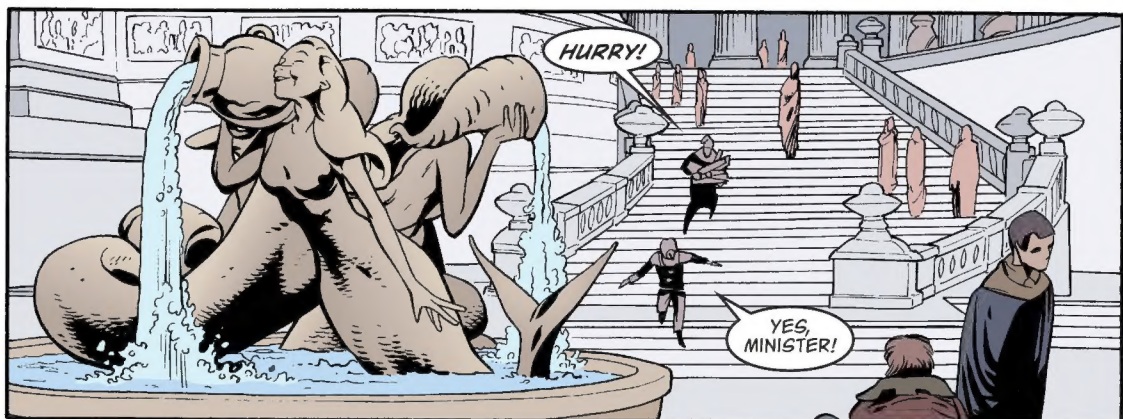
THAT'S WHY I'D NEVER FIND THE GATE IN THE CAVE.

AND WHY THIS GATE WASN'T USED FOR PASSENGERS.

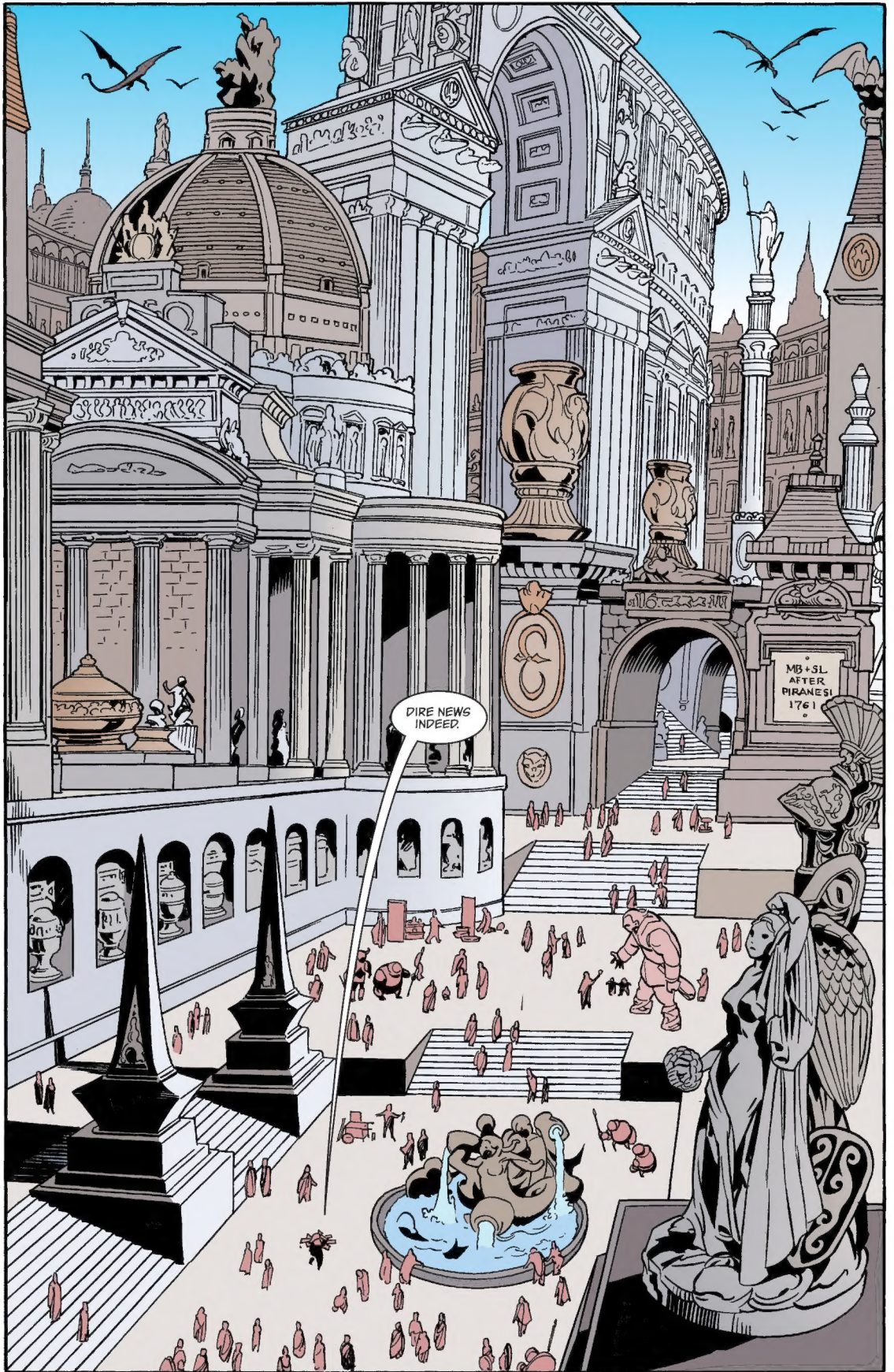
IT WAS INSIDE YOU, ALL ALONG.

CLEVER.









DIRE NEWS INDEED

MB + SL AFTER PIRANESI 1761





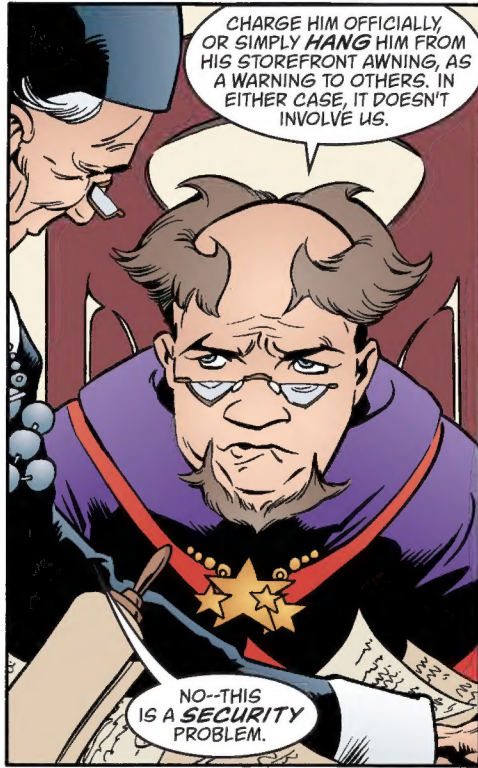
MIDDLECOCK!

WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT I HAVE TO INTERRUPT MY LUNCH TO ENTERTAIN A JUNIOR COMMISSIONER FROM THE MINISTRY OF TRANSWORLD LOGISTICS?



WE HAVE A SERIOUS PROBLEM, LORD MUDSNIPE.

SOME CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR OVERCHARGED THE MILITARY FOR SHIPPING AGAIN? **HARDLY** A MATTER FOR THE MINISTRY OF SORCERY.



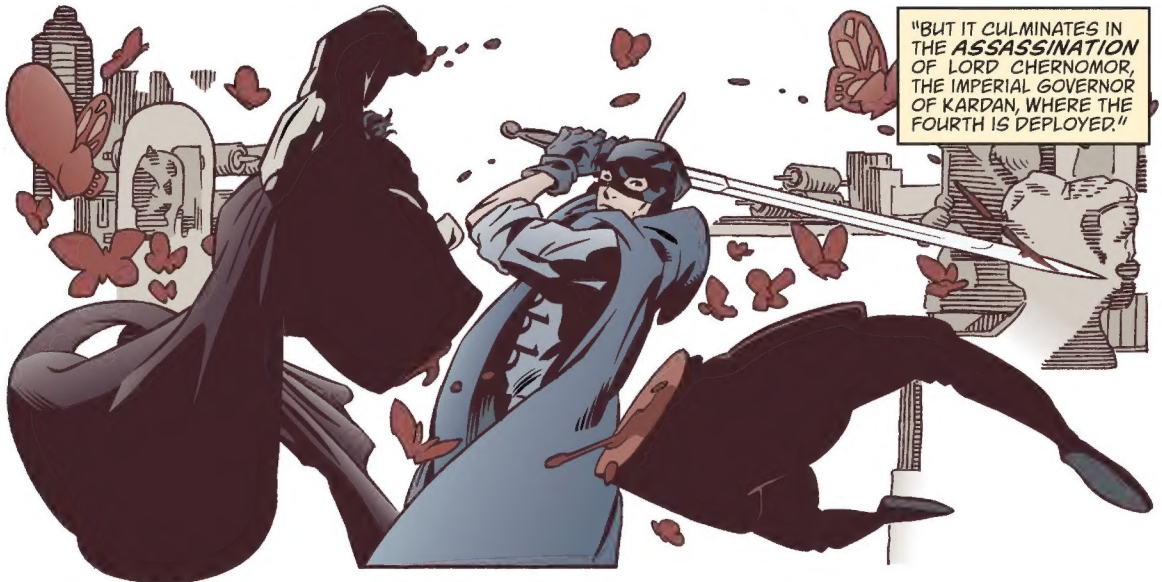
CHARGE HIM OFFICIALLY, OR SIMPLY **HANG** HIM FROM HIS STOREFRONT AWNING, AS A WARNING TO OTHERS. IN EITHER CASE, IT DOESN'T INVOLVE US.

NO--THIS IS A **SECURITY** PROBLEM.



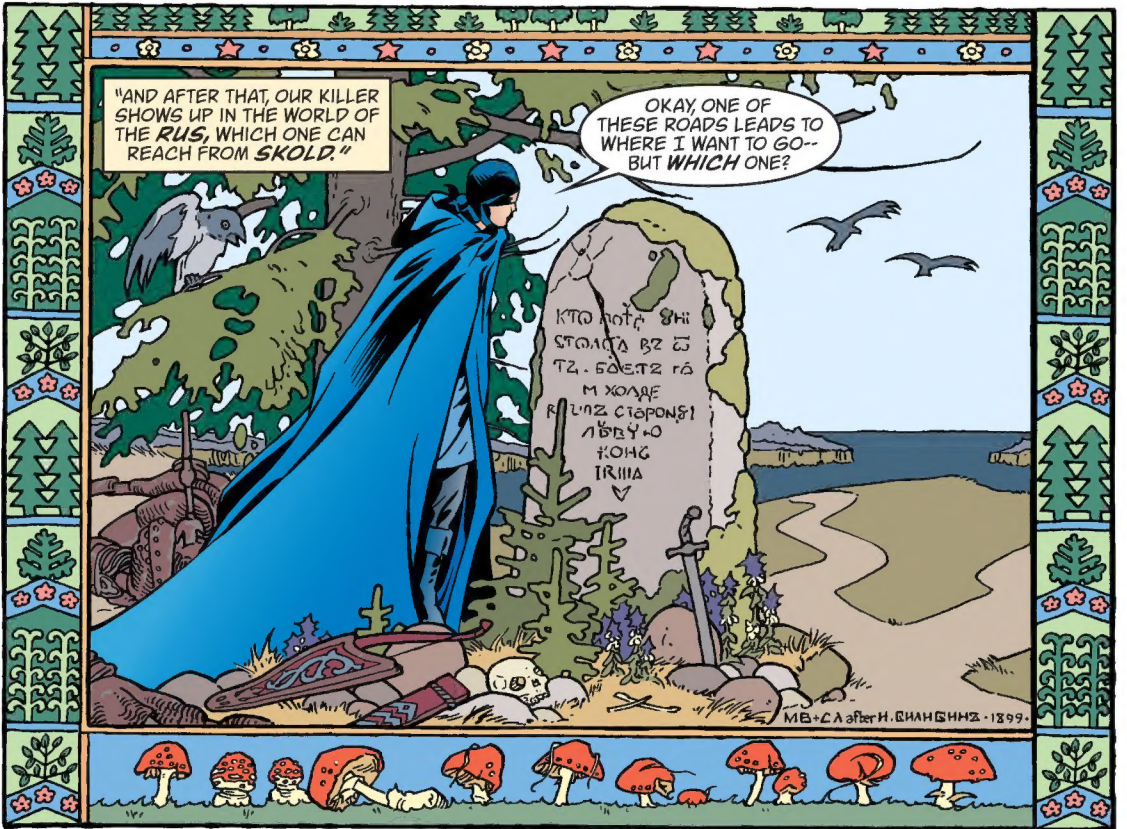
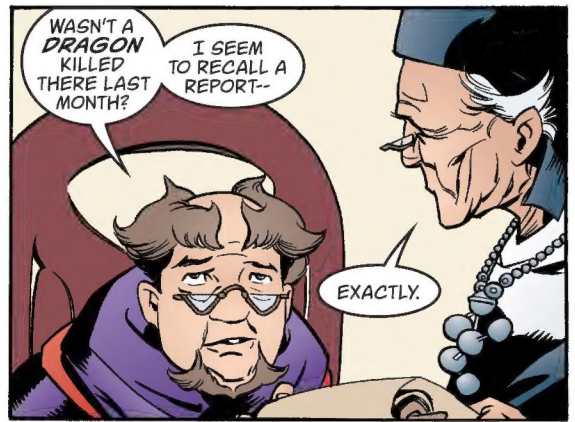
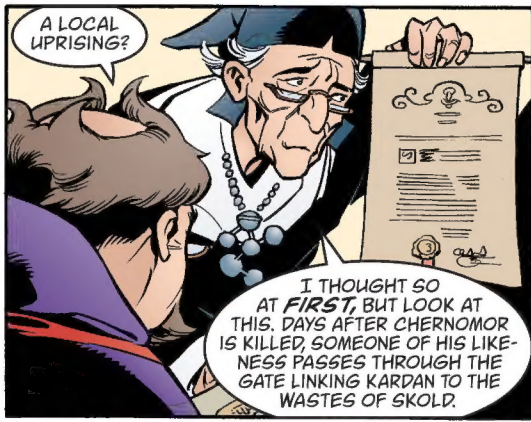
LOOK AT THESE REPORTS-- AND PAY **SPECIAL** ATTENTION TO HOW THE DATES LINE UP.

FIRST, A FEW MONTHS AGO, THERE'S A **DISRUPTION** IN THE FOURTH HORDE-- RANDOM KILLINGS AND SUCH.

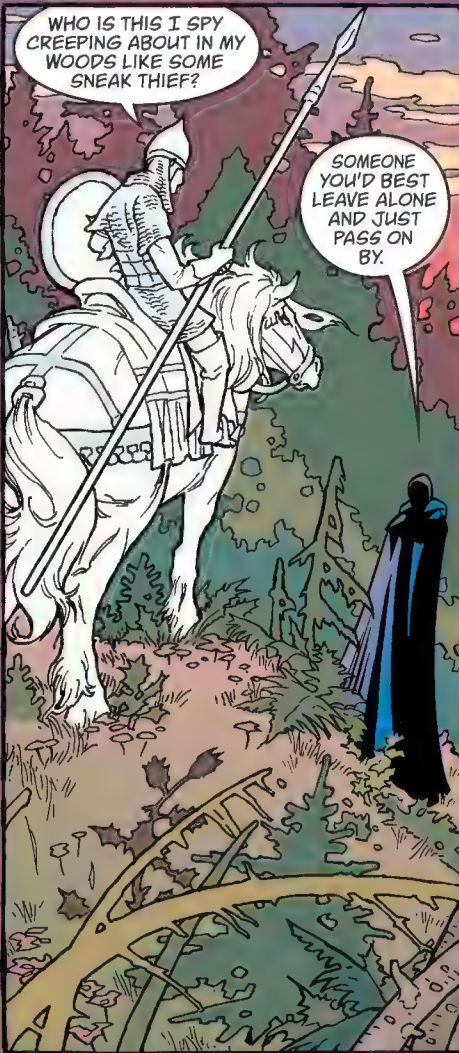


"BUT IT CULMINATES IN THE **ASSASSINATION** OF LORD CHERNOMOR, THE IMPERIAL GOVERNOR OF KARDAN, WHERE THE FOURTH IS DEPLOYED!"









WHO IS THIS I SPY  
CREEPING ABOUT IN MY  
WOODS LIKE SOME  
SNEAK THIEF?

SOMEONE  
YOU'D BEST  
LEAVE ALONE  
AND JUST  
PASS ON  
BY.



PASS  
BY?

NO ONE  
ORDERS **BRIGHT DAY**,  
THE **WHITE RIDER OF THE  
DAWN**, TO PASS BY!

IS THIS REALLY  
NECESSARY?



LISTEN,  
FELLA...

...I DON'T  
PARTICULARLY WANT  
TO KILL YOU.





AND I'M CERTAIN THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE DEAD.

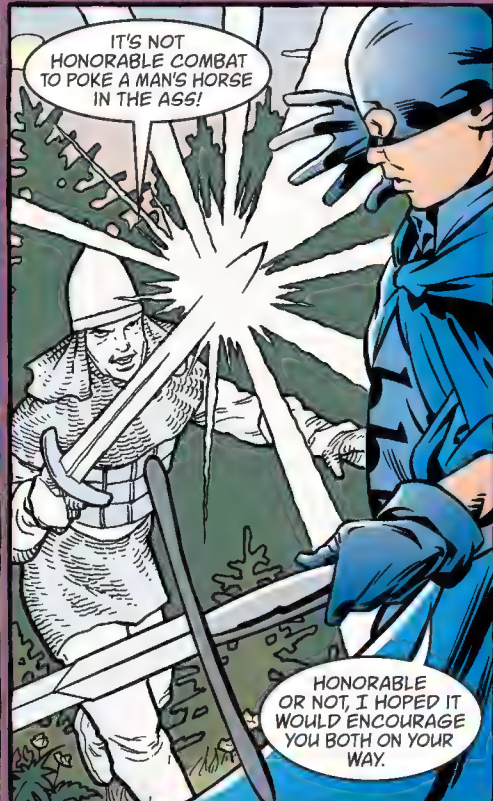


SO WHAT DO YOU SAY, PALE BUDDY?

YOU GO DOWN THE ROAD THAT WAY AND I GO DOWN THE ROAD THIS WAY AND WE PRETEND WE NEVER MET?



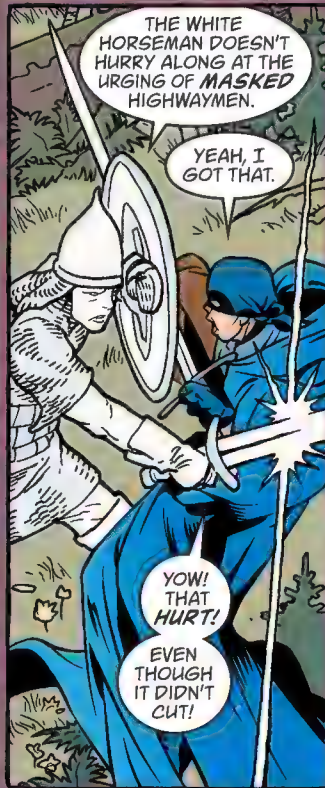
VARLET!  
HOW DARE YOU?



IT'S NOT HONORABLE COMBAT TO POKE A MAN'S HORSE IN THE ASS!

HONORABLE OR NOT, I HOPED IT WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU BOTH ON YOUR WAY.





THE WHITE HORSEMAN DOESN'T HURRY ALONG AT THE URGING OF MASKED HIGHWAYMEN.

YEAH, I GOT THAT.

YOW! THAT HURT!

EVEN THOUGH IT DIDN'T CUT!



I'LL CHOP YOUR SKULL AND SERVE YOU UP TO BABA YAGA'S **BOTTOMLESS** STEW POT.

YOU'LL SIMMER FOR **WEEKS** AND MAKE A TASTY TREAT FOR HER UPON HER RETURN TO THESE LANDS.



YOU *KNOW* BABA YAGA?

IT'S MY HONOR TO SERVE HER, ALONG WITH MY TWO BROTHER KNIGHTS.



WELL, THAT WAS THE **WRONG** THING FOR YOU TO SAY.

I REALLY DIDN'T WANT TO KILL YOU, BEFORE.

NOW I DO.



SMALL WORLDS, HUH?

I MET YOUR MISTRESS. HAD A LONG, **UNPLEASANT** CONVERSATION WITH HER.

SHE WON'T EVER BE COMING BACK HERE, NO MATTER **HOW** GOOD YOUR SOUP IS.



THOUGH I  
WASN'T LUCKY ENOUGH  
TO BE THE ONE TO KILL  
HER, I GOT TO WATCH HER  
FESTERING CORPSE GET  
DUMPED DOWN INTO  
THE PIT.

THINK OF  
THIS AS A LESSON IN  
JUDGMENT.

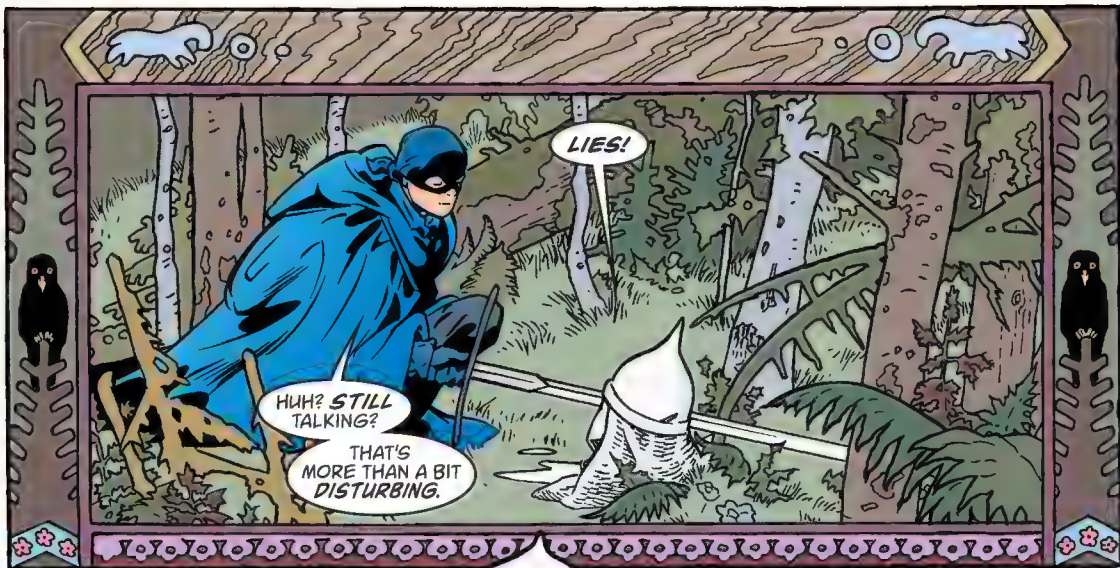
IN YOUR  
NEXT LIFE, BE MORE  
CAREFUL IN WHO YOU  
CHOOSE TO SERVE  
AND ADMIRE.

**SNICKER-  
SNACK!**

9999







LIES!

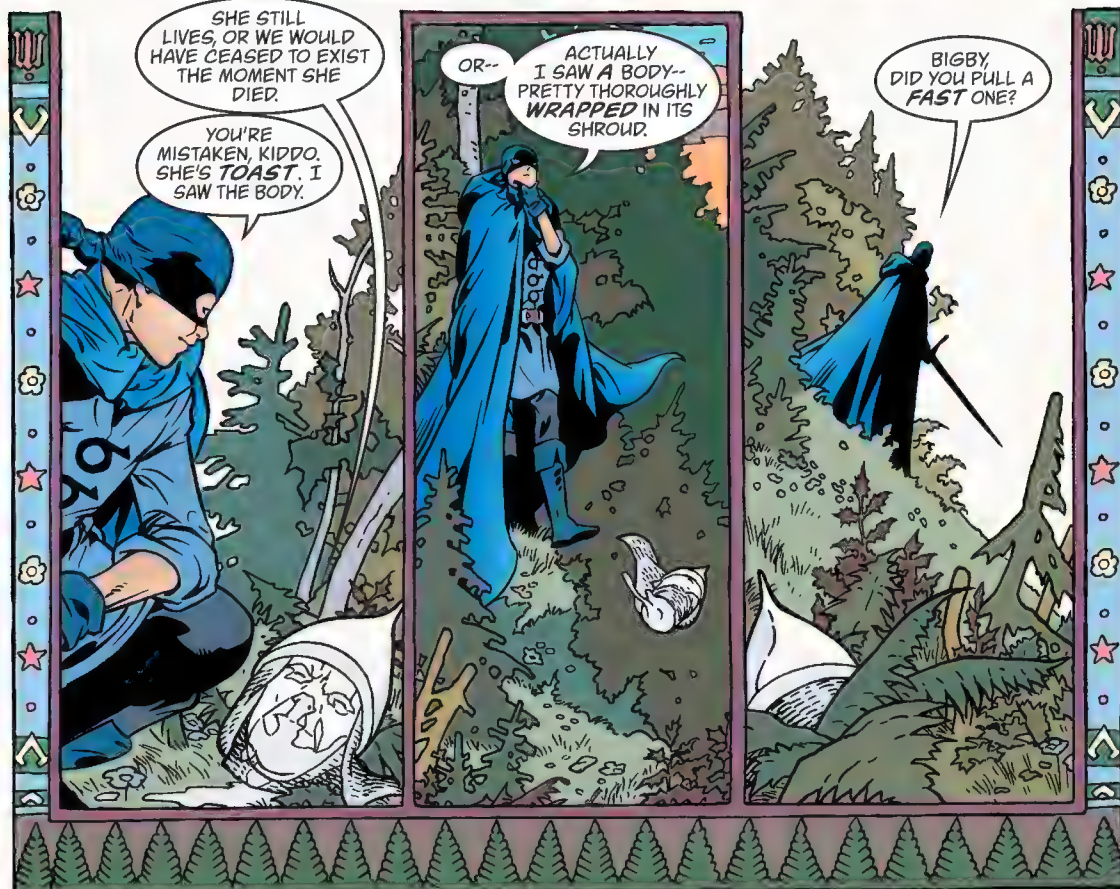
HUH? STILL TALKING?

THAT'S MORE THAN A BIT DISTURBING.



THOU ART A SCURRILOUS KNAVE OF LIES!

I AND MY BROTHER KNIGHTS ARE IRREVOCABLY BOUND TO BABA YAGA.



SHE STILL LIVES, OR WE WOULD HAVE CEASED TO EXIST THE MOMENT SHE DIED.

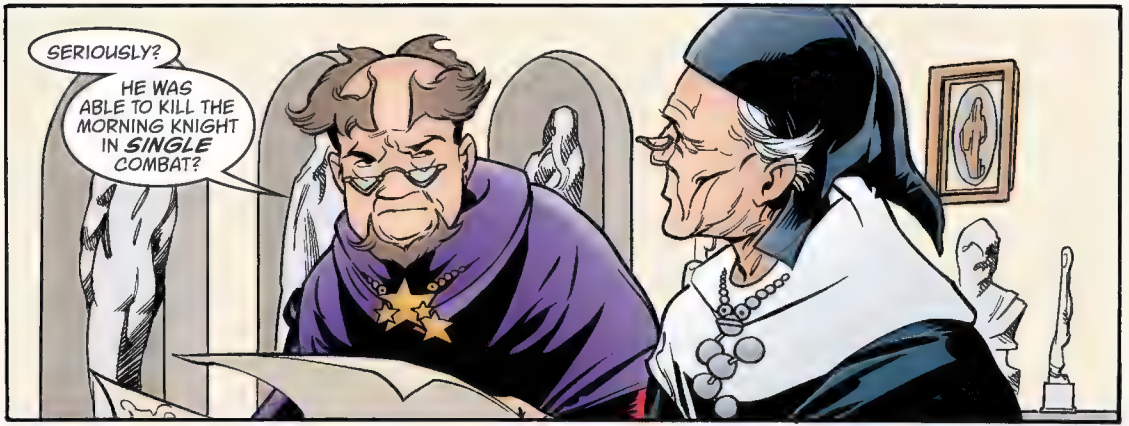
YOU'RE MISTAKEN, KIDDO. SHE'S TOAST. I SAW THE BODY.

OR--

ACTUALLY I SAW A BODY-- PRETTY THOROUGHLY WRAPPED IN ITS SHROUD.

BIGBY, DID YOU PULL A FAST ONE?





SERIOUSLY?

HE WAS  
ABLE TO KILL THE  
MORNING KNIGHT  
IN *SINGLE*  
COMBAT?



"NOT JUST BRIGHT  
DAY. OUR KILLER  
MET HIS TWO  
BROTHERS ON  
THE SAME ROAD."

KNOW THAT I AM  
**RADIANT SUN**,  
THE KNIGHT OF  
THE MIDDAY.

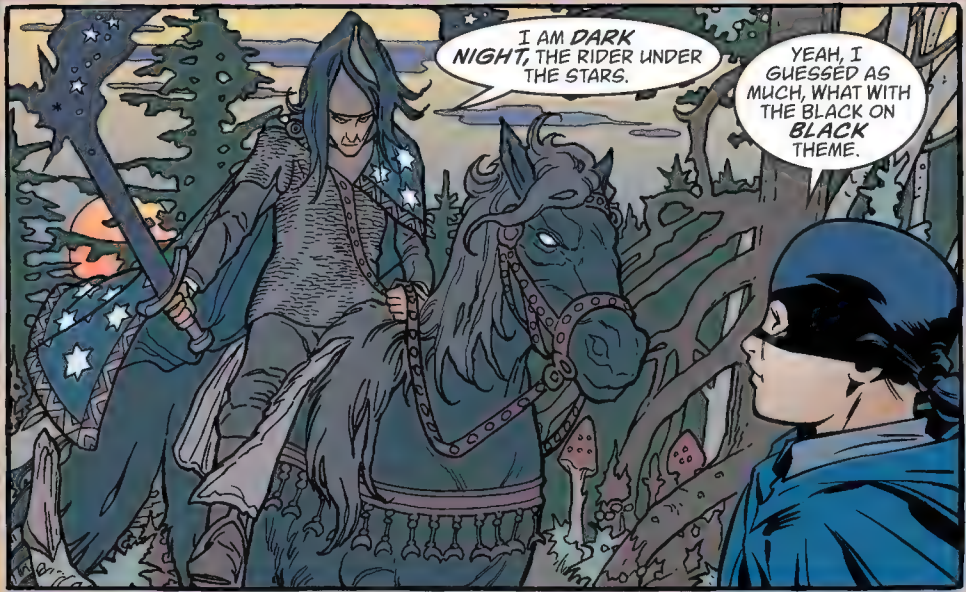
I'M  
BEGINNING TO  
SUSPECT THAT  
THESE PRE-FIGHT  
INTRODUCTIONS ARE  
**MANDATORY**  
WITH YOU  
GUYS.

FINE!  
CALL ME  
THE **DREAD BLUE**  
**AVENGER!**

I'M HERE  
TO EXACT VENGEANCE  
FOR EVERY SOUL YOU AND  
YOUR BOSS-LADY EVER  
KILLED, OR HURT OR EVEN  
MADE **FEEL** BAD.

HOW'S  
**THAT** FOR AN ICE-  
BREAKER?





I AM DARK NIGHT, THE RIDER UNDER THE STARS.

YEAH, I GUESSED AS MUCH, WHAT WITH THE BLACK ON BLACK THEME.



LOOK, HERE'S THE THING. WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT AND I'M GOING TO KILL YOU JUST LIKE I DID THE PALE WHITE GUY AND THE FLAMING RED GUY.  
I'M NOT BRAGGING, MIND YOU. IT'S JUST INEVITABLE.



BUT I'M WONDERING IF WE CAN CHAT A BIT FIRST.  
I WANT TO MAKE SURE I'M ON THE RIGHT ROAD.



I NEED TO GET TO THE PALACE OF THE TSAREVICH IVAN. THE GATE TO THE NEXT WORLD'S IN HIS THRONE ROOM, RIGHT?

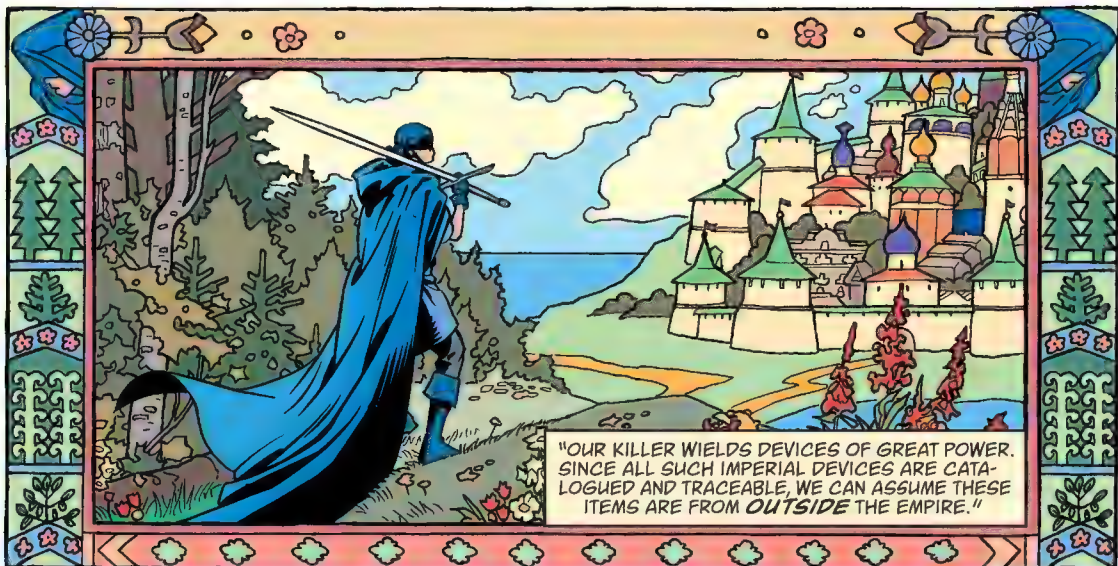


I'LL SPEAK TO YOU ONLY WITH MY BLADE.

:SIGH: OKAY, I THOUGHT AS MUCH, BUT I HAD TO TRY.







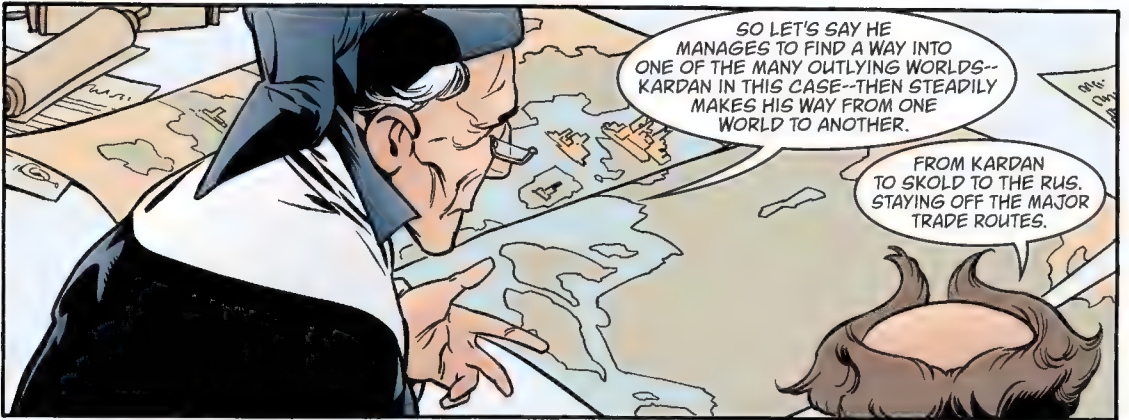




WHICH IMPLIES THAT OUR KILLER IS **ALSO** AN INVADER FROM OUTSIDE THE EMPIRE.

SEEMS LIKELY, BUT FROM **WHERE?**

HARD TO NARROW IT DOWN. THERE'RE SO **MANY** WORLDS WE'VE YET TO CONQUER.



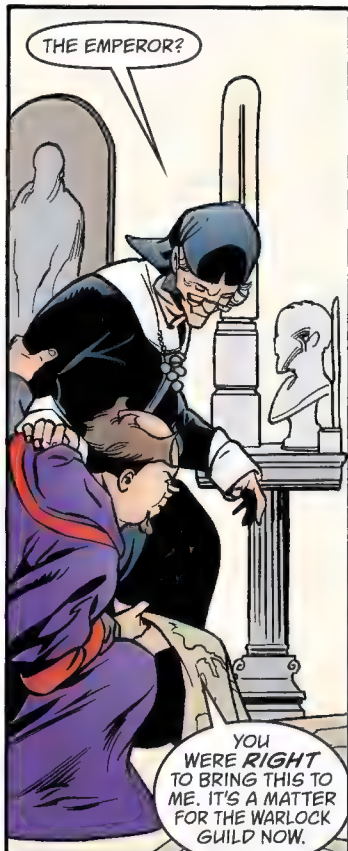
SO LET'S SAY HE MANAGES TO FIND A WAY INTO ONE OF THE MANY OUTLYING WORLDS--KARDAN IN THIS CASE--THEN STEADILY MAKES HIS WAY FROM ONE WORLD TO ANOTHER.

FROM KARDAN TO SKOLD TO THE RUS. STAYING OFF THE MAJOR TRADE ROUTES.



IT'S CLEAR HE'S USING THESE BACK ROUTES TO WORK HIS WAY HERE TO CALABRI ANAGNI AND THE IMPERIAL CITY. BUT **WHY?**

NO MATTER **HOW** POWERFUL, ONE **MAN** DOESN'T MAKE FOR AN INVASION. SO WE HAVE TO ASSUME ASSAS-SINATION.



THE EMPEROR?

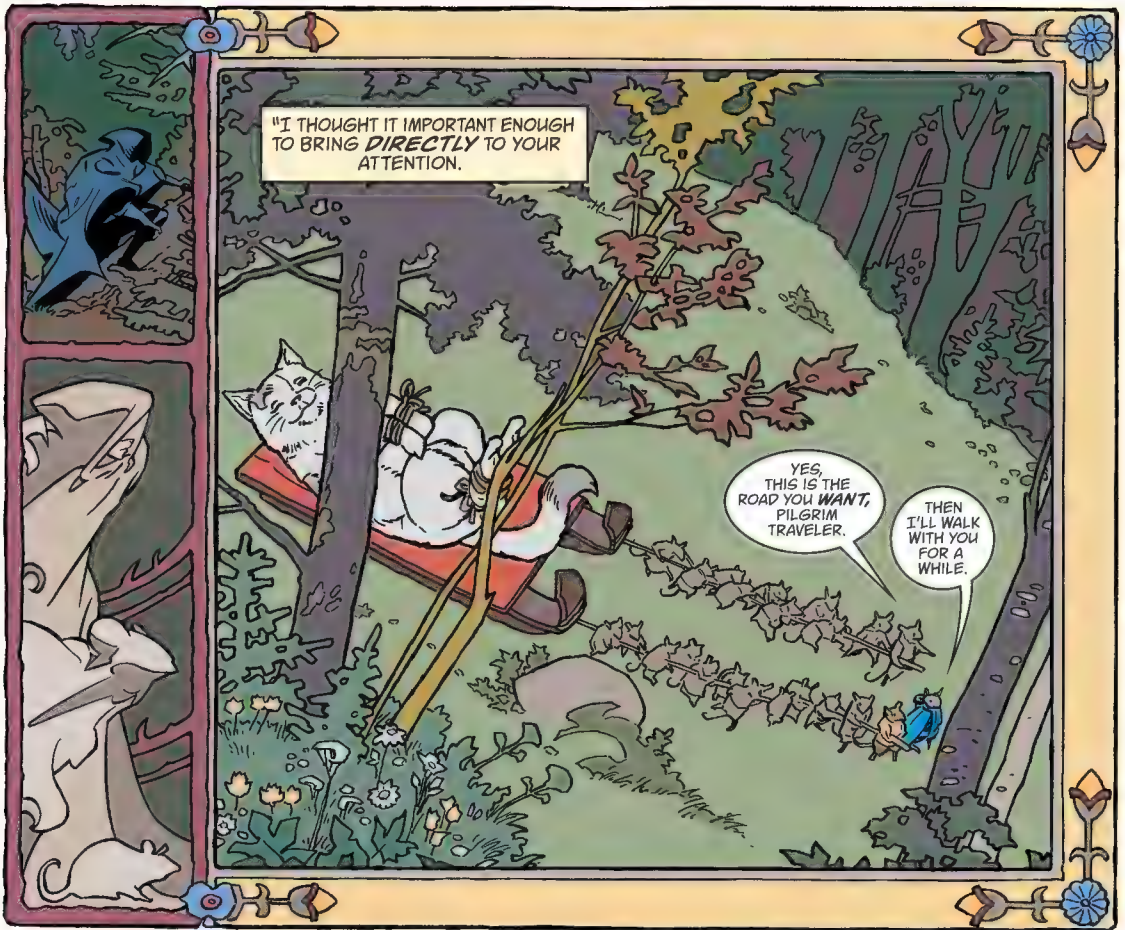
YOU WERE **RIGHT** TO BRING THIS TO ME. IT'S A MATTER FOR THE WARLOCK GUILD NOW.



YOU'RE **WASTED** AMONG CLERKS AND ACCOUNTANTS, MUDDLERCOCK.

I'M GOING TO HAVE YOU **MOVED** OVER HERE--**IMMEDIATELY**. GO PACK YOUR OFFICE.





"I THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO BRING *DIRECTLY* TO YOUR ATTENTION."

YES, THIS IS THE ROAD YOU WANT, PILGRIM TRAVELER.

THEN I'LL WALK WITH YOU FOR A WHILE.

"I HAVE OUR AGENTS SCOURING THE RUS, LOOKING FOR THE INVADER."

"SOONER OR LATER WE'LL FIND HIM. HOW WELL AND HOW LONG CAN A STRANGER BLEND IN?"

TRUTH IS, I'M *CURIOUS* TO SEE WHAT YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR THE CAT.

WE PLAN A FUNERAL FOR HIM.

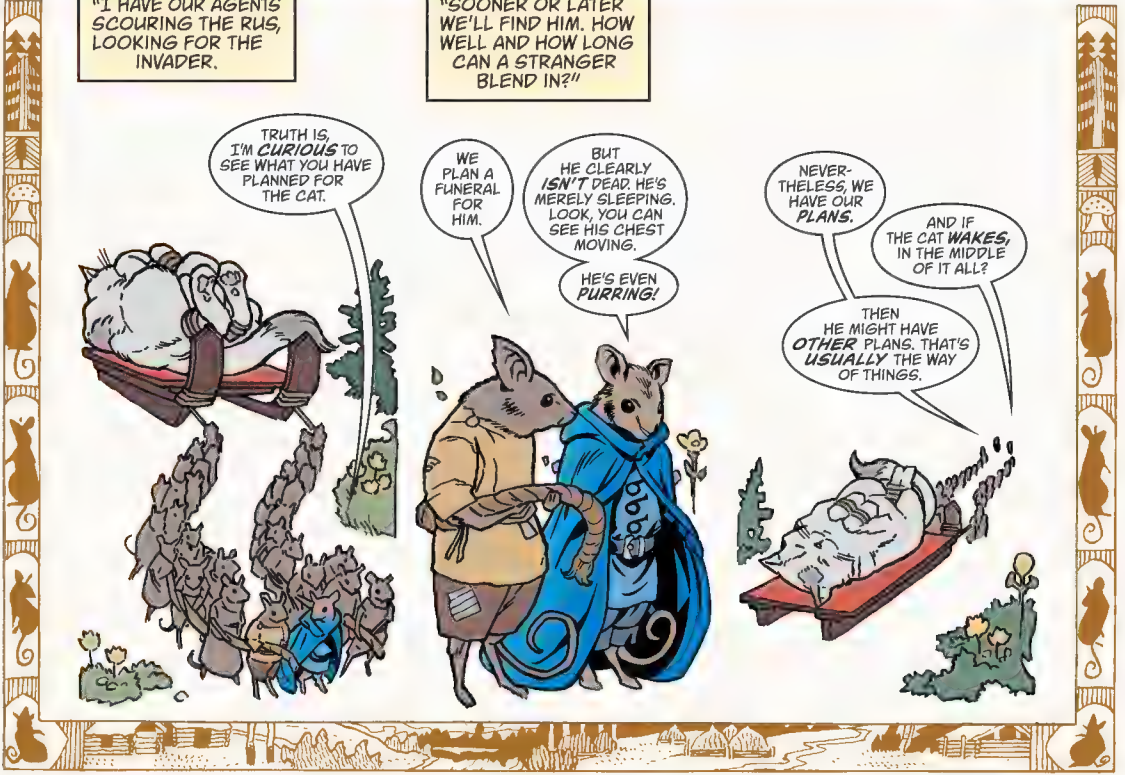
BUT HE CLEARLY *ISN'T* DEAD. HE'S MERELY SLEEPING. LOOK, YOU CAN SEE HIS CHEST MOVING.

HE'S EVEN *PURRRING!*

NEVER-THELESS, WE HAVE OUR *PLANS*.

AND IF THE CAT *WAKES*, IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL?

THEN HE MIGHT HAVE *OTHER* PLANS. THAT'S *USUALLY* THE WAY OF THINGS.







WHERE ARE YOU BOUND, STRANGER?

AFTER I'M RESTED, I PLAN TO FLY OVER THIS WIDE SEA.

WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DO THAT NOW? BETTER TO STAY HERE ON THE COASTLINE WHERE THE FISHING AND SCAVENGING ARE GOOD.



YEAH, WAIT FOR THE SEASON OF MIGRATION AND YOU'LL HAVE COMPANY.

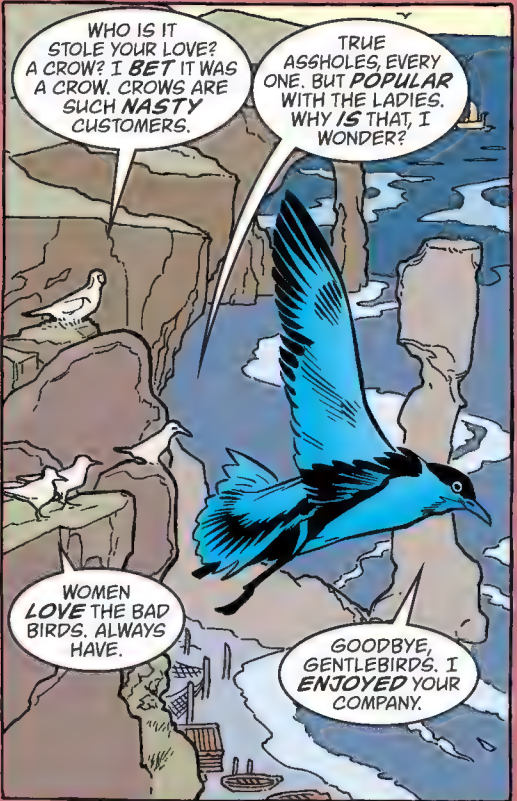
I'M IN TOO MUCH OF A HURRY. MY DESTINATION IS ON THAT DISTANT SHORE.



WHAT COULD INSPIRE YOU TO ACT SO UN-BIRDLIKE?

I'M ON A QUEST TO RESTORE TRUE LOVE AND REAP A HEALTHY MEASURE OF VENGEANCE.

THOSE ARE GOOD REASONS.



WHO IS IT STOLE YOUR LOVE? A CROW? I BET IT WAS A CROW. CROWS ARE SUCH NASTY CUSTOMERS.

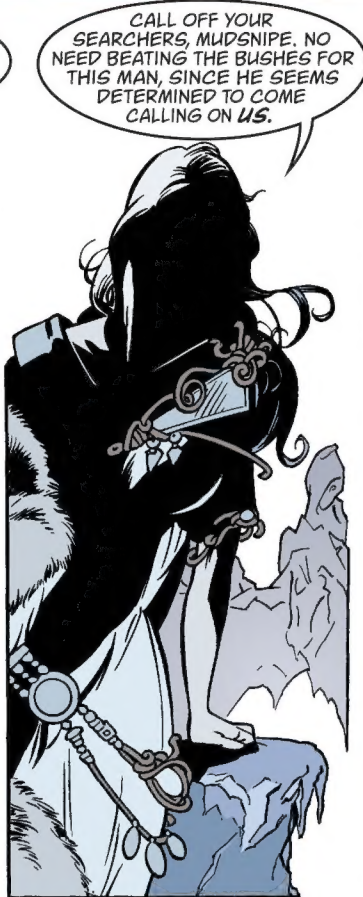
TRUE ASSHOLES, EVERY ONE. BUT POPULAR WITH THE LADIES. WHY IS THAT, I WONDER?

WOMEN LOVE THE BAD BIRDS. ALWAYS HAVE.

GOODBYE, GENTLEBIRDS. I ENJOYED YOUR COMPANY.









POWER IS  
A *SLIPPERY* TERM,  
MUDSNIPE.

OUR  
VISITOR MAY HAVE  
SOME *IMPRESSIVE* THINGS  
IN HIS BAG OF TRICKS, BUT NONE  
OF HIS HEROICS AND BACK-  
WOODS CONJURATIONS  
IMPRESSES *ME*, SO  
FAR.

NO MATTER  
HIS *TALENTS*, HE'S  
HARDLY COMPARABLE  
TO YOUR BELOVED  
SNOW QUEEN.



NEXT: THE ADVERSARY!



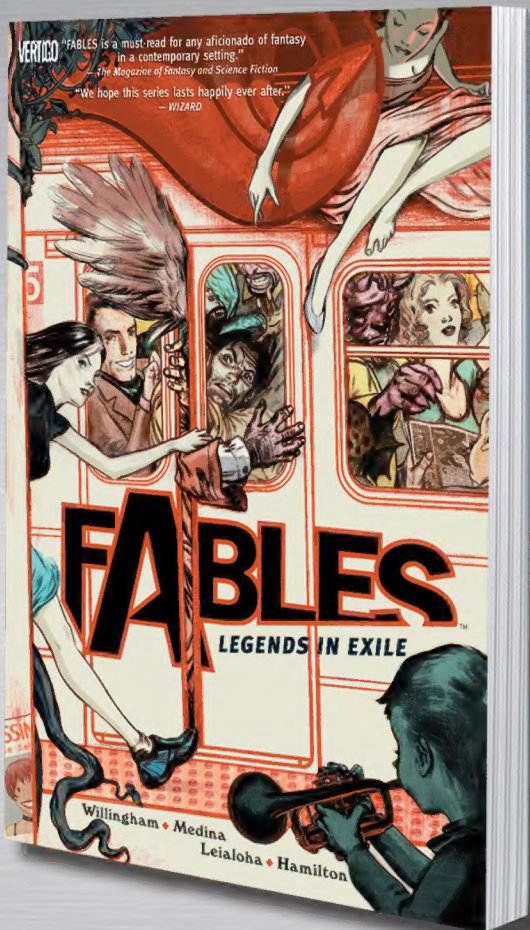
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# BILL WILLINGHAM

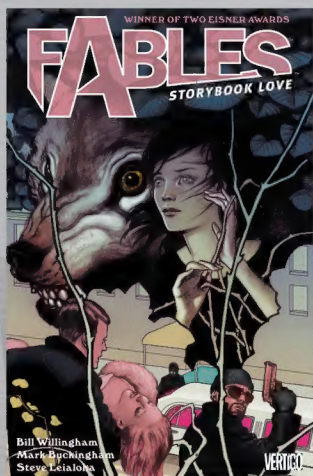
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- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
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- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



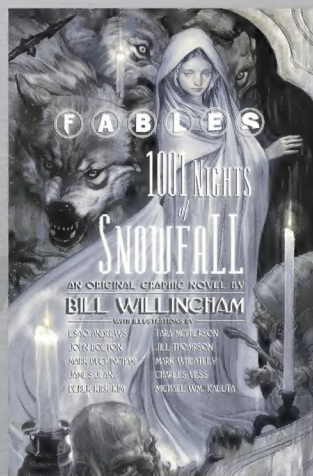
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NATHAN